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AUTHOR Eke, Richard
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ABSTRACT

This discussion of issues that merit investigation in British primary schools focuses on those issues that concern the links between pedagogic positions, the practices these involve, the media education issues that are thus addressed, the consequences for the activities of the learner, and the critical understandings these practices facilitate. It is noted that these issues are informed by two strands of arguments, i.e., the inadequacies of content-oriented provision of media education and the weaknesses of progressive proposals. Discussions of the issues are organized around three significant foci: (1) the children and their activities and responses in connection with any kind of media education provision; (2) teachers' perspectives on their curriculum arrangements, their concerns with mass media, and their thinking about children's learning; and (3) the classroom in action, including the practical arrangements, classroom negotiations, critical agenda, and a critique of content-bound provision. The development of a progressive model of primary media education based on a review of recent British proposals and recent American work of similar scope is then described, and a characterization of progressive primary media education based on a comparison of the proposals from both cultures is presented. A critique of the progressive model is then given, and the paper concludes by suggesting ways of enhancing this model. (19 references) (CGD)

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Richard Eke,
Department of Education,
Bristol Polytechnic,
Redland Hill,
BRISTOL BS6 6UZ.

'Media Education Issues for Classroom Investigation in British Primary Schools.'

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MEDIA EDUCATION ISSUES FOR CLASSROOM INVESTIGATION IN BRITISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

I want to argue here that there are a range of issues which merit investigation in British Primary Schools. The issues identified are informed by two strands of argument, the inadequacies of content-orientated provision and the weaknesses of progressive proposals. In order to identify the weaknesses of progressive proposals it will be necessary to formulate a progressive model of primary media education, and to achieve this I shall offer a review of recent British proposals compared to recent American work of similar scope. Having identified the weaknesses of such a model an enhanced model for progressive provision will be offered.

The issues identified here spring directly from a concern with classroom provision, equally significant issues concerned with methodology and with our understanding of children's reading of television are beyond the scope of this paper. Although organised under the headings 'children', 'teachers' and 'the classroom in action', the latter is the principal focus of the issues here. They concern the links between pedagogic positions, the practices these involve, the media education issues that are thus addressed, the consequences for the activities of the learner, and the critical understandings these practices facilitate. The issues raised here lend themselves to organisation around three significant foci - the experience and accounts of children, teachers, and of the classroom in action. In the spirit of progressivism this will begin with the children and their activity and responses in connection with any kind of media education provision, with subsequent consideration of issues raised by progressive and more content-

bound provision. This will be followed by consideration of teachers' perspectives on their curriculum arrangements, their concerns with mass media and their thinking about childrens' learning in this area. This stage of the discussion of research issues will be concluded by a presentation of issues raised by consideration of the classroom in action, the practical arrangements, classroom negotiations, critical agenda, and critique of content-bound provision, which this involves.

The many issues that are raised for research in this manner are not intended to be seen as located within fixed impermeable categories. Many could be located in one or more categories or mutually inform each other. The purpose of organising the issues raised in this paper in this way is simply to keep the research agenda manageable. This agenda could be further expanded by consideration of childrens' understanding of mass-media as discussed in research focussing on this issue but this is, as I have indicated, beyond the scope of this paper.

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CHILDREN.

(i) Their activity and responses in connection with media education provision.

One major question which must haunt the mind of anybody engaging in media education for primary children is that of what difference it makes, if any, to childrens' responses to media products, both in the classroom and in their subsequent consumption. Do children develop the critical autonomy which is deemed so desirable? In particular, do they come to understand the dimensions of the imaginative spaces media proffer them, and can this include an understanding of power-relations and values embodied within media products and the versions of 'the good life' they offer? Associated with this is a consideration of which issues primary aged children find dificult, which issues they can be taught about, and what they learn as a result of such teaching.

(ii) Children and progressive provision.

A key issue to be considered in this context is the assumption that children will learn about 'mass-media' through engaging in 'production'. What, if anything, is learnt? In particular, the acquisition of a 'critical mastery' through practical work is in question. Are children the active media communicators the progressives depict them to be? Do children find things to photograph, film or video 'just popping up'? If they do, are they allowed to pursue this, and how does this connect with critical mastery and the issues addressed in the classroom? It is further asserted that progressive work involves children in turning the camera on themselves. Consideration needs to be given to whether or not this occurs, in what circumstances and with what consequences. Do such approaches support an investigative approach to mass-media or do they involve children in replicating dominant conventions?

(iii) Children and content-orientated approaches.

The possibility of offering a well structured scheme of work in media education within the primary classroom and the sense that children make of such work and the tensions this raises are open to investigation. In particular do content-orientated approaches involve children in recognising media products as the operation of language-like sign systems? A less demanding issue is simply that of investigating how children talk about media products. The introduction of the 'Picture Stories' materials allows us to ask if children using them actually develop a critical understanding of how photographic meanings are constructed?

TEACHERS.

(i) Curriculum Arrangements.

Two sets of concerns for investigation are identified here; those concerned specifically with curricula for mass-media and those concerned with broader curriculum matters. 'Mass-media' concerns centre around the range of issues that informs practice. ~~How far are proposals~~ to do with media education per se and how much to do with other, albeit laudable, ends? Are the proposals informed by 'media theory' and in particular do teachers have relevant knowledge of substansive curriculum issues? What key issues are teachers prepared to take on, do they, in their teaching, investigate such issues and do they make them explcit, and especially is it practical to teach about 'spaces to be occupied'? In terms of broader curriculum matters issues concerned with the breadth of teachers' definitions of literacy and their conception of the broad curriculum as related to media education and the consequential effect of such definitions and conceptions ought to be investigated. Of particular interest here are practitioners' willingness to re-conceptualize primary curricula in terms of symbol systems and their awareness of the dangers of producing fixed definitions of sound media education and normal viewers.

(ii) Mass-media concerns.

Whether or not teachers involved with media education actually find mass-media output unhelpful is an interesting avenue to pursue in terms of the ways in which this might be the case and the manner in which they respond to it. The degree to which a concern with mass-media can be housed within existing programmes of study, and the relationships between this approach and the innovations it allows for will also be investigated. The dichotomy between process and content-orientated provision will be further investigated through looking at whether or not teachers involved in process-orientated provision really do focus on methods and employ the reflective teaching it implies. It will also be interesting to see how far a 'syllabus' deflects teachers from making individual provision and responding to issues raised in their classrooms.

(iii) Thinking about children.

There are two issues to be pursued here; one applying to all teachers and one to those offering progressive orientated provision. It will be interesting to look at how far understandings of children's response to mass-media are seen as significant in making provision for media education; how far such understandings are seen as relevant and how far they are employed, and with what results. This will be particularly interesting in terms of progressively orientated work, where a broadly Piagetian approach is usually employed. It will be interesting to see if this is the case in media education, and what consequences, if any, are of such an approach.

THE CLASSROOM IN ACTION.

It should be clear that many of the issues addressed above will also be explored observing classrooms in action as well as responding to the accounts of teachers and learners. The issues presented below are those that seem particularly suited to this approach.

(i) Practical Arrangements.

From observation it is intended to examine whether or not satisfactory resources are available in schools and if arrangments can be made for their use in the manner the various pedagogies demand. Further investigation in schools where they clearly are available will involve looking at legitimating influences and expertise in pursuing media education. The best media education has been depicted as allowing for a 'double exposure' which encourages both mastery of representation and a critical understanding of representational purposes. It is intended to explore the feasibility of this proposition in practice. In this context, or the absence of it, it will be interesting to see what children and teachers consider a skilled representation to be and connected with this, how evaluation of curricula provision is cued. Associated with these ideas will be an exploration of the boundaries between what is acceptable in the classroom as media education, and what is simply acceptable behaviour.

(ii) The Classroom Agenda.

The broad issue in terms of the agenda for classroom activity is usually depicted as who controls it and how. In specific terms, this will be considered as the kinds of work related to content and progressively orientated provision. Progressively orientated provision suggests that the classroom agenda - the issues explored, the practices developed, will spring from the children's own activities. Beyond seeing if this is the case, lies

the vexed issue of the possibility of teaching in a way that values children's viewing without letting television companies set the classroom agenda, which embodies relevant knowledge of children and of substansive curriculum issues. The practicality of this project will be poursued with more detailed reference to the variety of syntaxes and modes of treatment in various forms of representation which children have experience of. Where work is related to viewing, how is the issue of exploring conventional usage which reinforces many of the values and representational methods teachers are uncertain about resolved? Progressively orientated provision may also entail its own version of what is easily teachable and thus particular media education issues to be addressed. It has been argued that content-orientated approaches continually postpone children's interests in mass-media and the meaning children themselves produce with detrimental effects on children's learning; it remains to be shown by reference to practice as well as to theory. Further, issues to be explored here involve consideration of the impact of fragmented curricula and whether or not a fragmented understanding follows or are the foundations of a holistic understanding built through processes of accretion? It has been argued that content-orientated approaches position understanding 'media exploitation' as more important than understanding the processes of mediation - is this the case? Is an understanding of the production of particular kinds of meaning more important than an understanding of the practices of children producing meaning? Are such approaches boring for children? Do they switch off? It will be interesting to see what counts as easily teachable through content-orientated approaches and in practice the substansive media issues raised by such an approach. Finally, it will be interesting to see whether or not content-bound curricula exist in practice.

(iii) Classroom negotiations.

All of the issues raised above could have been located here. Those issues that are raised here are those that would not fit easily into the above categories. The key issue here follows from those raised above; whatever kind of curriculum provision is offered, is talking about media reporesentation more important, in practical terms, than producing media representation? Linked to this is the question of how much scope practice is given to children for the authentic expression of their own ideas. This is particularly important for progressively-orientated provision, since practitioners aspire to emphasise the processes of education rather than the content of information. Yet paradoxically progressive may not be able to produce the success aspired to since it lacks the essential discipline required. These remain matters for investigation and are suggestive of the final point to be raised - that in practice a synthesis between progressively and content-orientated approaches may be achieved, and may indeed be essential.

The focus here on the problems of content and progressively-orientated provision would not arise if either could be shown to be satisfactory. I want to identify firstly the problems with content-orientated provision, since it is the inadequacies of this that demand the developmnt of alternative provision.

CONTENT-ORIENTATED PROVISION.

To lump a diversity of approaches together, to characterise them in a particular way, and then to criticise them on the basis of this characterisation may seem unfair. Not all the work I have in mind (for example, Masterman (1980), Dondis (1973), Masterman and Kiddie (1983) share all of the faults identified here, nor do they necessarily consistently manifest any single problem. None the less they do all show some of them some of the time.

The attempt, then, is to criticise certain trends, or directions, in curriculum development in this area. In particular, that strand of work which springs from a basis of media theory as the major source. Whilst many of the issues involved in such theories can inform primary teaching and curriculum development they may not have any overt role in classroom activity. Where they have been overt there tends to be a move directly from the concerns of "media theory" to those of the classroom. One aspect of this approach is the tendency to break down media issues/ theory into smaller 'logical' components. In other words there seems to be an idea of syllabus construction which breaks down the holistic event of being a viewer into a list of component parts that can be reasonably derived from an analysis of the activity. Once a way of communicating has been fragmented it is difficult to avoid the temptation to sequence the fragments logically in terms of difficulty with progress carefully mapped from the easiest to the most difficult and to teach on this basis. An understanding of mass-media appropriate to the child can then be glossed over in favour of an assessment of the child's performance of a particular course component. At its worst this results in overlaying the child's world with thin strips of knowledge and then peeling it off again to see how much has stuck.

Such cautions may prove useful since it would be possible to derive a media studies curriculum for the primary school from a view of 'how the mass-media operates in our culture'. Teaching methodologies which take this as a principle starting point tend to employ a selection of images from "mainstream child culture" as a basis for discourse. Children are there, in "media studies classes", to learn how to talk about the media properly and they'll probably make a few images of their own to sustain them in learning a way of talking. This construction of a primary media studies curriculum is, of course, a typification rather than an actuality

and is, I think, a useful one. The two features I have typified such a curriculum as manifesting are:-

(a) An interest in making children aware of processes of mediation within our culture and following from this,

(b) A subject-centred, atomistic, approach to the primary media studies curriculum.

While a syllabus of this kind may not actually be pursued in a primary school it seems worthwhile to sound one or two cautionary notes about atomistic teaching derived from rather than informed by, 'theories of mediation'. Erecting a strawperson in order to knock them down can be a futile endeavour. It might be defended on the grounds that such methodologies do typify aspects of current approaches to media studies curricula and that the cautions derived from such a critique serve as signposts to alternative constructions. Anderson (1983) in his review of eight American 'television literacy curricula' employs a similar technique to similar ends. His findings and conclusions are similar to those reached here and as has been indicated, will be introduced later in this discussion.

For the purpose of this discussion I hope to show that two characterisations of atomistic, knowledge-orientated studies orientated media studies curricula, that of exploiting media-generated children's crazes, and of the structured scheme, can be particularly useful.

(i) Exploiting the 'craze'.

Star Wars, or whatever the vogue cinema or televisual events for children are, have great interest for teachers of mediation in the primary years. The majority of children are likely to have some level of involvement

in media events of this kind. They provide a basis for discussion of a wealth of media studies issues, a basis which many children are only too happy to see come into school. We can look at stars, studios, publicity, money, narrative conventions, clothing codes .... really a very fruitful area of work. The rubric of this approach accepts that children may not always greet the subject with enthusiasm but this may be due to extrinsic factors or some adaptation of current practice may rectify the situation. An alternative view of this provision might depict it as addressing a series of questions all of which might be of the teacher's making, and the responses to which serve only to demonstrate that you can talk in the way teachers approve of about your favourite movies? The central theme of this characterisation, that of drawing on the artefacts of "mainstram child culture" as a basis for classroom discourse is valid, but not without its problems:-

(a): <u>The problem of what they don't know.</u>

The hypothesis is that children don't fully understand their own culture and they have a right to develop a fuller understanding of 'media operations' within it. This fuller understanding turns out to be that derived from an adult critique of aspects of our culture which might provide some kind of antidote to the worst excesses of those who are responsible for producing and marketing the media. There are then three aspects to this problem. That in teaching children what they don't understand , our view of childhood must inherently be a deficit one. That the value of the image lies not in its own subtleties but in those of proper talk about them. That this talk will innoculate children against the ravages of our culture, some of which we are going to bring into our classroom to study. If we whittle this right down, it seems

that all this activity revolves around enabling children to talk about the dangers of cultural replication because 'It's good for them', like teaching them to cross a road safely. Objective: that the children can get safely through an evening's viewing. Leaving aside the self-evident problem of reproducing a questionable culture (with its racial, gender and class stereotypes) in our classrooms, there remains this emphasis on talk and the deficit view of childhood. This is not the place to spell out in detail the problems involved here and it will suffice if our attention is drawn to:- the limitations of talk as a vehicle for development in the primary years and the sigaificance of concrete operations at this stage of development; the apparent worth this approach places upon image work and the insufficency of this legitimation for primary school purposes.

(b) The problem of reading before writing.

The hypothesis is that before children can construct an image they have to understand how images are constructed. This understanding again turns out to be the critique discussed earlier. It is this critique that must be understood prior to making one's own pictures, albeit with certain caveats about the child's understanding. So you have to read an image before you can write one. This would place media studies in a unique position in the primary curriculum, one where reading and writing do not run hand in hand. Some additional aspects to this problem thereby present themselves. That the child's purposes are always deferred to the teacher's; that the importance of the child's own media representations are secondary to representations obtaining within our culture within the processes of teaching and learning.We begin here to move towards some of the problems related to an atomistic conception of the

curriculum. Before doing so it is as well to note that the model of teaching and learning which might usually obtain in a primary classroom places great emphasis on the child's representations of their world and, as a result of this the processes of interpreting and embodying ideas are usually seen as running hand-in-hand. A further critique of this area involves consideration of the consequences of atomistic curricula, with which it is closely associated, and it is to this area we now turn.

(ii) The Structured Scheme.

Such schemes depend on the process of splitting the curriculum and then splitting the syllabus and are not without pitfalls.

(a): The pitfall of boredom.

There is an old saw that if we really wanted to put children off comics, we'd make them a compulsory part of the curriculum, a set of activities you 'have to do'. It can be suggested that the fractured nature of the structured scheme offers many children the prospect of built-in boredom. It's boring for them because they are expected to exercise across a range of pre-set activities as the price of exercising their interest in creating their own media products.

(b): The pitfall of syllabi.

When we start to break things down into bits, it's often difficult to know when we've broken them down small enough for the children to consume. It's also difficult to know what order to offer them in. We are about obliging children to undertake a variety of tasks which may or may not grip their imagination and which may or may not facilitate the development of their understanding of media. We have substituted a syllabus for the

need to keep a careful eye on the match between children's development and the scope of the activities they undertake. The child is no longer at the centre of the enterprise, the curriculum is. The consequences of this perspective for the primary curriculum are well documented and are connected with arguments advanced throughout this paper.

(c) The Pitfall of 'Lego' Thinking.

Most children, in most primary classrooms, know that just because you can take a Lego house to bits it doesn't mean that you an put it back together again in the same way. Yet many curriculum planners, including teachers, are willing to break down 'curriculum Lego' in this way on the grounds that this makes it easier for children to reconstruct this knowledge into a more or less suitable substitute for the original edifice. The move from an adult 'deconstruction' of some processes of mediation to children's 'reconstruction' does not necessarily follow, witness, for example, linguistic and developmental psycholinguistic accounts of talking.

Developers of media studies for the secondary years are at their most public concerned with developing syllabi which can legitimate the subject within secondary schools. Much of this work, and the thinking with which it is associated can lend rigour to proposals for the primary years. Yet some kinds of syllabus construction, which move too easily from questions about 'media theory' to matters of classroom life may well do the endeavour a dis-service. Within the context of primary education there are a range of consequences of such an approach which many teachers will find worrying.

(i) A deficit view of childhood.

(ii) The primacy of talk over action.

(iii) An emphasis on children understanding media exploitation at the expense of children experiencing at first hand the processes of mediation.

(iv) Following from (iii), that the processes of interpreting and embodying ideas, within a variety of media forms, are not seen as running hand in hand.

(v) It could easily become boring, for teacher and learner.

(vi) The substitution of a syllabus for 'match'.

(vii) The assumption that children will automatically build their understandings of the media in the same way as we have broken them down.

Worries, then, about certain assumptions concerning classroom practice and thereby the processes of teaching and learning, and in particular about the absence of a coherent view of child development applied to this field. From the arguments offered so far, some basic constituents of a primary media studies curriculum can be offered:-

(i) It should be informed by "theories of media".

(ii) It should be informed by theories of child development.

(iii) Reading and writing images should run hand in hand.

(iv) It should value children's capacity and desire to embody their ideas and understand the ideas of others in public communications.

(v) It should not assume children build their understandings of the media in the same way as adults break them down.

(vi) It should be concerned to match children's development rather than prescribe a syllabus for them to follow.

Much has been made here of the pitfalls of developing curricula solely from a media theory perspective but provision which fails to take account of such perspectives are not immune to criticism.
For example, the Schools Council 'Social and Communications Skills' work (Lorac and Weiss (1981)) avoids many of the dangers of an atomistic approach

whilst treating the media used as unproblematic. This treatment of the symbol systems involved as unproblematic misses many opportunities for facilitating the use of, and developments in, pupils' understanding of the media. If these, then, are the inadequacies of content-orientated approaches, it still remains to be seen how far progressive approaches can meet such objections. It would be wrong to typify British endeavours in this respect as a single unified whole and they are therefore presented here as occupying a continuum of approaches ranging from the least to the most progressive.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRESSIVE MODEL.

(i) Least Progressive.

This characterisation refers to the following proposals:- Eke (1977) Kiddie (n.d.), Picture Stories (Bazalgette et al, 1986). The least progressive proposals are included in this general review of progressive approaches by virtue of their insistence on children engaging in some kind of practical activity and by their location within a general framework of integrated teaching and learning within the primary school. Media studies activities are depicted as being suitable for junior, and especially older junior, children. They begin with image study as an especially important point of entry to the area and tend to involve special exercises which are based on the teacher's agenda. Teaching is depicted as involving children in exploring material which is structured hierarchically. Where these activities are seen to involve practical image-making work, the importance of the activity is located in its function of helping children to understand 'media studies concepts'. Examples of such concepts would be bias and 'how television is produced'. Children learn about how meanings are made through these activities which usually approach more than one medium. The point was made in discussion that within the context of

current language work in the primary school that they may not entail a recognition of media as language like sign systems. In any event they do full justice to the potential of this aspect of media education. It was observed that approaches of this kind are open to many of the criticisms levelled at the atomistic/fragmented approaches discussed earlier.

(ii) Semi-progressive.

This characterisation refers to the following proposals:- Dickinson and Clarke (1983), Davies (1983), Squires (1983). Semi-progressive proposals also depict media studies work with older junior children and all take image study as a starting point. With varying degrees of emphasis they go on to stress that unless some creative usage is undertaken by children the concepts involved are, as Davies puts it, 'sterile'. First children learn about how meaning making takes place within the media and then they can learn to make meaning themselves. There is a continuing concern about bias or partiality in the media but this is now accompanied by an increasing focus upon what children do and the skills they use.

(iii) Most Progressive.

This characterisation refers to the following proposals: Gosling (1984), McGlade (1983) and Howard (1983). The practical work described here takes place with lower, middle and upper primary children. Their starting point is children working as 'image-makers' which usually means taking photographs. Children taking photographs of each other and discussing them is a strong feature here. The activities often form part of some wider study in which photography is seen as a tool for communication. All representations are viewed as partial and children learn about this as they learn to put their ideas into public form in a variety of media. There is a strong emphasis on children's activities and on observing them as they go about their tasks.

Either explicitly or implicitly they rest on a developmental conception of education which might be described as broadly Piagetian. The classroom agenda here springs from children's activities.

This summary has tended to emphasise the differences betwen approaches and yet a number of similarities can be observed:-

They all depict teachers as well as pupils as learning.

At some level they all share an interest in image study and children's practical activity.

They all depict their approach to media education as integrated.

The proposals discussed vary considerably in length although the majority of them tend towards the brief. It is therefore not surprising that only two of them make any direct reference to any theoriectical conceptions underpinning the proposals they make. From the practice they describe, however, nearly all of them appear to spring from work associated with the approaches of Golay (1972) and Gautheir (1975) and through these writers from the flow of European media critics and theorists. Wedded to this perspective appears to be an interest in 'post-Plowden' primary practice. This progressive strand of primary education is itself open to criticism. Before turning to such criticism and the implications of this and of current proposals for the work in hand, contrasts will be drawn between the present study and a study of American proposals,since these will also inform the progress of this investigation.

(iv) Recent American Proposals.

In a comparable review to that presented above, James Anderson (1983) discusses eight American projects concerned with television literacy and the critical viewer.[1] He locates television literacy as a subset of media literacy. Following an historical resume he notes that there is not yet enough experience of practice for curriculum developers to form a consensus

as to what constitutes good provision. Some of this difficulty may arise from the age span of the projects he reviews (kindergarten to grade 2) and further from the diversity of the theoretical lineages from which the projects spring. This diversity compares interestingly with the broadly homogenous position underlying the majority of British primary work. Anderson describes four distinct positions located in his earlier work (Anderson, 1980) on critical viewing curricula. The positions he describes include two which rarely occur in British proposals - impact mediation and goal attainment. In brief, impact mediation holds that one can pre-condition viewers in order to 'heighten the likelihood of pro-social consequences of viewing' (p.302). According to Anderson, goal attainment has been the dominant paradigm in the development of curricula. The central theme of such work might be described as:

> 'It is not television itself that is under the microscope; it is the student's relationship to television.' (Far West Lab., 1979, p.2)

The interventionist position of these perspectives appears to run contrary to the progressive ethos of most British work. Indeed, few find any sympathy with such apparently mechanistic approaches. The remaining two models Anderson describes, 'cultural understanding' and 'visual literacy', appear to be considerably closer to the British position. The cultural understanding model involves the interrogation of media that cultural functioning may be understood. To this end, with its final outcome of the liberally educated individual, it is desirable that students understand the tools and processes of analysis. Such a position, drawing attention to curriculum methods, is proximate to what has been characterised as the least progressive of British proposals. Curriculum method, so often explicit in British work, is only made so in the fourth position Anderson

identified, the visual literacy model. Here, more than in any other model,

> 'Instruction from this approach is in the doing ..... Evaluation ... is cued to the ability to describe and, or, produce technique.'
>
> (p.304)

This position again compares closely with British proposals of the least progressive kind. It can be distinguished from the most progressive, and semi-progressive proposals by the absence of any consideration of children's communicative purposes in 'the doing'. Before turning to instructional objectives, as Anderson does, the following may be noted:-

None of the British proposals discussed have as an overtly interventionist stance as those proposals discussed by Anderson. These could be identified with an attempt, by schools, to engage in 'policing' children's television consumption and in particular to overtly encourage children to police themselves in the absence of a monitorial adult. The British proposals taking a more 'liberal' interest in media forms as tools for communication, where a change in viewing habits may be desirable but is not the overt focus of curriculum proposals.

Connected with this apparent liberal tendency in British primary proposals is an emphasis on 'activities children undertake (involving a focus on curriculum methods) rather than on instructional objectives (involving a focus on curriculum outcomes). Here two features of current British proposals are highlighted - the view taken in the majority of them that media education is educationally worthwile with socially desirable consequences rather than a means to an 'innoculationist' end, and the

developmental link proposed between individual understanding and curriculum provision as compared to the mechanical ink, apparent in Anderson's review, proposed between curriculum objectives and individual understanding.

Further discussion of this latter point involves a closer examination of the curriculum objectives proposed and Anderson argues that the patterns of instructional objectives give us a good insight into what curriculum specialists have in mind concerning the notion of television literacy. Listing these objectives in order of requency, Anderson begins with 'The Grammar and Syntax of Television'. The eight projects all consider aural and visual elements and their relationship within programmes. Second in frequency are objectives which focus on management of viewing. Seven of the projects specify objbectives related to advertising, four treating it as a 'necessary evil' and three as intending to persuade, not fully inform. Seven projects have objectives concerned with the relative values of presentation in different media. The same number have objectives focussing on the television industry and society. Six state objectives considering value analysis in terms of 'identification, clarification and evaluation' in different formats. Five projects state objectives dealing with the following areas (not necessarily the same five): dealing with the consequences of television viewing; evaluation, criticism and analysis, using traditional literary models; news production and potential bias; fantasy/reality (e.g. de-mystifying 'stunts'; potential errors in entertainment programming). Of the other objectives championed by one or two projects, Anderson notes that many:

> 'While certainly of value in their own right, appear to be outside the area of television literacy per se.' (p.311)

By way of summary, Anderson takes the group of projects as a whole in a move towards a definition of television literacy. Analysing these objectives, he suggests that four different activities make up the nucleus of the notion of television literacy:

(i) Exposition or description; the ability to describe the rules that govern the grammar and syntax of television program forms; the technical processes involved in production and television electronics; the parts of the television industry; the role of television in society and a catalogue of behavioural consequences accompanied by some research findings.

(ii) Identification; the application of various category shemes that extract and classify programme elements; persuasive appeals, and value constructs from television content.

(iii) Analysis; surfacing personal purposes for viewing; selecting working elements into categories; comparing value constructs; attaching news sources to news stories; and distinguishes fantasy from reality.

(iv) Attribution or decision-making duration of viewing, programme choices, consumer choices, consequences of viewing, utility of information for some prior purpose.

Anderson goes on to venture that most of the instruction time is spent in the processes of categorical description, the largest share of classroom activities is involved with the development and explication of classification schemes and the identification of content to fit these schemes. Anderson continues:

> 'Less than a third of the print space (in instructional support texts) is spent on analysis attribution, and decision-making.' (p.312)

It is clear from Anderson's review that these American proposals would be liable to the same kind of critique as offered earlier in this chapter. Their fragmented aproach, reliance on adult models of understanding, the emphasis on reading over writing, assumptions that children build up understandings in the same way as adults break them down and so on. In comparison with British approaches, it has already been noted that certain aspects of these (U.K.) proposals are highlighted, the absence of an overtly interventionist intention, a focus on methods rather than objectives, and such study as educationally worthwhile rather than simply socially desirable. Since the position of the American proposals appears quite similar to the least progressive of the British proposals discussed, further comparisons involve consideration only of the semi-progressive and most progressive materials discussed earlier. Here the emphasis on children learning to produce meaning as distinct from consuming adult constructions, the focus on what children do and the skills they develop rather than on what teachers do and the analysis they develop. Children, then, are seen as image-makers as well as consumers and both in terms of classroom activity and activity related to the media as active communicators as well as simply receivers.

In essence, Anderson arrives at a very similar position following a review of some research literature and the models of the critical viewer. He points up several inadequacies of 'models of the critical viewer' that have implications for the work in hand and for educational provision. His depiction of the notion that right thoughts lead to right actions and appropriate explanations is simplistic in itself, and, depending on the notion of a central meaning in televisual products to which we can all retire, all reacting in similar ways and can therefore teach all children to recognise. Quite simply, this view ignores children watching television, their construction of meaning and their pruposes, uses, and gratifications.

To summarize a key strand in his thought at this stage - the inadequacy of notions of children as critical viewers is based upon what adults would like, rather than what children do. Thus it is that he turns to the ecological approach. Of this he writes:

> 'Given an ecological approach one can no longer maintain a single model of the critical viewer. Rather, the notion of the critical viewer must be re-interpreted within the given ecology of the social actors. Common instruction becomes less useful, and the emphasis is placed on individual diagnoses and educational prescriptions.' (p.321)

Anderson's concern with individuality has close connections with the views of 'progressives' described earlier. His concern with objectives, however, leads him to contemplate a vision of teachers planning an individual scheme of instruction for each pupil. This position devalues the child's own capacity for making meaning and stands in sharp contrast to the most progressive forms of media education discussed earlier. In the latter case, beginning from a similar perspective of children as active readers, the response is to propose classrooms as arenas which facilitate such meaning-making and its exchange.

Following several ecological case studies he comes to his final set of observations. Terming these 'Thoughts for the future', they move a good deal closer to British proposals and represent a substantial criticism of the work he discusses. He raises the following four points in the order presented here:

(i) Stop Trying to Save Children from Television.

Here the argument runs, television viewing is part of membership in this culture, the adverserial approach often taken must be confusing to children faced with a massive array of inducements to attend to this media. 'The focus of instruction should be onstrategies of satisfaction, not guilt inducement. Children enjoy television, let them.' (p.326)

(ii) Value the Child for Being a Child.

Anderson argues that we prejudice our understanding of media education when we base it on adult models.

> 'It would seem appropriate to work from child-based models of behaviour if we are to help the child approach the problems he or she faces.' (p.326)

(iii) Justify the Content of Instruction in the Conditions of Every-day Viewing.

In this, Anderson is critical of teachers who focus on what is easy to teach. (e.g. content analysis) rather than things to do with what children do (i.e. watch television). A particularly telling remark in this area is his comment (earlier in the paper) contrasting children's viewing figures for new programmes with the amount of curriculum space given over to them.

(iv) Be Knowledgeable of the Educational Establishment.

There are three elements to Anderson's case here, firstly that some instruction ignores the political realities of negotiating the curriculum with school boards, superintendents, teachers, students and parents. Secondly, he presents a common cycle where outside consultants help

introduce media literacy programmes, administrators champion them and then they fade as teachers move to simplify their responsibilities under pressure from students and parents. Hence, thirdly:

> 'Successful curriculum innovations are ones that can be assimilated into established objectives to achieve traditional goals. Curriculum developers would do well to house television literacy objectives within existing programmes of study.' (p.327)

SUMMARY.

Here, then, after reviewing eight American proposals on media education, Anderson arrives at a position very similar to the British 'progressive tradition'. He rejects overtly, negatively interventionist approaches; adult-based models of curricula; teaching what is easy to teach and curricula which have no fit with existing practices. In place of much of what he has reviewed he seems to be arguing for a framework which has all the hallmarks of a child-centred approach. His version of such an approach offers some elaboration of the progessive model and would appear to focus on: Strategies that attend to the satisfactions children experience watching television, based on child-centred models of behaviour, that relate to children's ordinary viewing and that extend or elaborate existing provision rather than supplant it.

The concern with locating media education around children's experience of satisfaction in ordinary viewing is not emphasised in British proposals, whilst the idea of media education as an extension of elaboration of existing provision is rather underplayed.

The need to identify the substansive content of media education curricula is glossed in favour of describing practices in British proposals

and it is frequently difficult to specify desired educational outcomes. Anderson's review highlights the problems in basing provision on 'adult models' but this need not imply that 'adult models' ought not to inform curriculum provision. A more substantial engagement between adult and child-based models orientated towards what's worthwhile about 'ordinary viewing' would appear to be one aspect of provision further proposals ought to consider. In framing 'adult models' in terms of the critical viewer, Anderson moves towards cultural relativism (the ecological approach) and individual responses. This focus on individual responses compares with the British focus on the classroom as an arena for the exchange and negotiation of meaning. Neither approach need necessarily deal effectively with ideas about individual readings in relation to preferred or dominant readings and their implications for media education.

British and American proposals for media education which focus on or include the primary years have been reviewed. The two have been contrasted using Anderson's review of American proposals to illuminate the review of British proposals presented here. The next stage in this discussion will be to characterise progressive primary media education based upon a comparison of proposals from two cultures. Such proposals have connections with wider curriculum processes and organisation which will be discussed. Following these discussions criticism of the 'progressive model' will be summarised.

A CHARACTERISATION OF PROGRESSIVE PRIMARY MEDIA EDUCATION BASED UPON A COMPARISON OF PROPOSALS FROM TWO CULTURES.

From the discussion presented so far, sources of illumination for the nature of a progressive model of media education in the primary years can be identified. In order of occurance these are: criticism of syllabus

construction that moves too easily from media theory to media education, a review of recent British proposals, and implications drawn from American experience. It can be noted from these areas that two principal features predominate in discussion of progressive approaches to primary media education. These are: a recognition of children as active viewers and learners and, a concern with the hallmarks of good classroom provision. In developing the characterisation presented here, these two features are taken as major foci and the issues raised previously are clustered around these in summary form.

Children are depicted as active viewers and learners.

(a) Children 'at large'.

Children are represented as active communicators and receivers of communication. The concern is to teach that which links with the child's ordinary selections from the media, not the things that are easily teachable. In so doing, home viewing is linked with school activity, with the focus being on children's satisfactions in viewing, not making them feel guilty about it. Children 'switch off' when they find it boring.

(b) The child in the classroom.

The focus is on what children do and the skills they use, valuing children's capacity and desire to embody their ideas, and to understand the ideas others embody, in public communications. The emphasis is on children having first-hand experience of processes of mediation, and thus of partiality; this is not overwhelmed by a concern to tackle the issues of exploitation. Classroom activity is thus focussed on their representing their world, using technology as image-makers, not on their 'innoculation' against the media. Media education on this view is

educationally worthwhile and not just socially desirable. The processes of interpreting and embodying ideas run hand in hand, the classroom's 'critical agenda' springing from this activity.

(c) A child-centred approach is adopted.

What might be called a 'broad Piagetian' approach is adopted, that values children's potentials rather than concentrates on their lacks. This involves children learning to produce meaning, not 'consume' the teacher's constructions of the media, hence the emphasis on children's activities rather than on talking about it. In particular it sees being able to talk about media in a way the teacher approves of, leading to viewing behaviour the teacher approves of as a simplistic link between children's behaviour and curriculum provision. Such connections are not assumed; links between curriculum and understanding are sought after by careful observation of children as they work.

3. *Good curriculum provision is characterised.*

(a) Media education is depicted as an integrated study.

Teachers pursuing primary media studies employ a broad definition of literacy, drawing on the insights of other curriculum areas and fitting the activity in wich existing provision. The study is thus not 'content bound' but an integrated study in which the classroom is viewed as an arena for the exchange, negotiation and development of meaning.

(b) Media education in the primary years focusses on curriculum methods.

The progressive approach does not assume that children will build up their understanding of the media in the same way as teachers break their adult understanding down, hence, the focus is on curriculum methods rather than objectives. Matching activities to children's development is seen as more important than following a syllabus. Hence it demands that

teachers employ an informed professional understanding in pursuing the curriculum in action. Thus media education is depicted as informed by 'media theory' rather than determined by it, with ideas about image study and partiality having particular frequency in recent work.

CRITICISMS OF THE PROGRESSIVE MODEL.

The characterisation offered above is open to criticism and amplification from a number of perspectives:-

(1) Much of the thinking that underpins the characterisation can be located in the 'progressive primary tradition'; it remains to be seen how far it conforms to that ideology.

(ii) The progressive tradition is not without its critics and many of their arguments can be applied here.

(iii) The form of criticism applied to content-orientated approaches earlier in this chapter excluded any illumination that may be gained from an examination of such work.

There is not space here to explore in depth the issues raised by a detailed criticism of these proposals and hence a summary is offered, although full details are available on request to the author.

SUMMARY OF CRITICISMS OF PROGRESSIVE APPROACH.

(a) No certainty is offered as to the substansive issues of primary media education and thus there is little attempt to synthesise perspectives on children, knowledge, culture and pedagogy.

(b) There is a lack of clarity about the aims of the progressive model, about the basis for making curriculum selections, and about teachers' willingness to do so.

(c) The progressive model appears to allow television companies to fix the agenda for classroom activity.

(d) The issue of teaching both a mastery of the dominant application of various forms of representation and of teaching a critical awareness of these it not addressed. In particular, the progressive model does not consider the link between children's own productions and their consumption of 'mass' productions.

(e) The progressive model may not actually produce the educational success which it seeks since it may not offer sufficient discipline to do so.

(f) The progressive model assumes that children will understand, through 'doing', the production and reading of contemporary cultural artifacts, and that they will do so without any explicit understanding of the practices that production involves.

(g) Associated with (f), the progressive model can raise issues concerned with dubious representations at a content level, but would also appear to assume this will lead to a simple transformation without any need to address issues of power relations located within texts and the possible lives children might live. The progressive model ignores the processes and possible value positions this involves.

(h) The boundaries between what is acceptable in terms of the use of mass-media and what is acceptable in terms of classroom behaviour can easily become blurred.

(i) The progressive model allows for the definition of a 'sound media education' and the ' good viewer', which can then become normal practice. The production of normal viewers thus being, in part, achieved at the site of media education. An approach designed to educate children about the media may in fact end up defining normal (or aware, or good, or critical)

viewing. In so doing this will be defined in terms of the values of white male middle-class democrats, all othercategories being exlcluded by definition.

(i) The practice of the progressive model implies reflective teaching. It remains to be seen how far this is the case in practice.

(j) Much of the 'mass media ' is unhelpful to the teacher; it is not of primary significance, and satisfactory arrangements have not been made for its pursuit in schools.

(k) The progressive model exhibits a limited conception of the "forms of representation" and in particular has not sought to draw out the implications of the syntaxes and modes of treatment involved both for the activity with which it is concerned and for other curriculum areas.

(l) An acceptance of the position which the progressive model implies calls for a re-conceptualisation of the whole primary curriculum which places an increased, or perhaps central, emphasis on symbol systems within our culture.

(m) There is not substansive identification of what might constitute relevant knowledge of the child of the curriculum area in the progressive model of primary media education.

TOWARDS AN ENHANCED PROGRESSIVE MODEL OF PRIMARY MEDIA EDUCATION.

To discuss an enhanced model of progressive primary media education is to move towards the purely speculative. Criticism of a model which was developed from isolated reports of practice can become both further removed from practice and inform potential practical developments. It involves both seeking changes in existing pratice and asking questions as to the nature of the possible. This section will be concerned with the application of the

criticisms and comments offered above. The range of issues progressive practitioners need to take on board are: The identification of key issues teachers ought to be concerned with; the lack of sufficient concern with critical understanding; the introduction of criteria for the study, creation and selection of media texts in the classroom; the limited conception of curricula the progressive model proposes.

(i) Key Issues.

The progressive model of primary media education would be enhanced if practitioners made explicit the key issues - such as those listed by Masterman, 1985 (p. 2b) which inform their teaching. This is particularly significant since teaching based upon children's viewing could simply respond to the viewing agenda set by television companies, not all of which is helpful to teachers. Such teaching requires relevant knowledge of children and of substansive curriculum issues; to what degree such teaching is feasible in practice remains an issue for investigation.

(ii) Critical Understanding.

The progressive model does not necessarily present itself as a disciplined approach to mass media because of the lack of clarity about the key issues to be tackled and because of the assumption that children learn through doing without making explicit what the discipline of the materials and methods are. It is clear that an investivative approach needs to be followed which will provide for the learner to acquire both mastery of the dominant forms of representation and an autonomous critical understanding of their image.

(iii) Criteria for the study of media texts.

The progressive approach asserts that media educators should begin with children's viewing and activity but it can be argued here that not all viewing and activity is equally satisfactory for educational purposes. The creation and reading of media texts provides children with the opportunity to imagine possible futures and media educators ought to be aware of this. This involves consideration of the 'good life' in the future and what constitutes a rich understanding of the power relations, values, and possible futures embodied within media texts. The degree to which the study of 'spaces to be occupied' is possible in the primary classroom is a matter for further investigation.

(iv) Curricula conceptions.

The emphasis on activity pursued in the progressive model allows for the blurring of boundaries between what is acceptable classroom activity and what is acceptable in terms of using or studying the media. This is further confused by the assertion that satisfactory arrangements do not exist in most primary schools for the progressive model to function as characterised. Even if this were the case, the progressive model lacks clarity as to the range of syntaxes and modes of treatment children should have experience of. If these considerations were applied to the broader curriculum the limited range of possibilities offered would become apparent. Beyond the criticism of existing arrangements, the progressive model implies a re-conceptualization of the entire primary school curriculum. This would involve placing children's understanding of sign systems and their usage within our culture at the centre of the enterprise.

NOTES.

1. A full list of these is given by Anderson (p.304) as:

The Milford Project; The Receivership Skills Project in East Syracuse, Minoa; The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Office of Education Project; The WNET Office of Education Project; The Far West Laboratory Office of Education Project; The Idaho Falls Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Title IV-C Project; The ABC Project and The Anderson-Ploghoft curriculum.

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